

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 EC BRU 05469 181925Z

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SUBJECT: EC SOCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL JUNE 17, 1975: HIGHLIGHTS

1. SUMMARY: THE EC SOCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL MET IN LUXEMBOURG ON JUNE 17, 1975. THE MINISTERS AGREED UPON A RECOMMENDATION (NOT LEGALLY BINDING) THE THE MEMBER STATES CALLING FOR IMPLEMENTATION BY NO LATER THAN DECEMBER 31, 1978 OF A STANDARDIZED 40- HOURS WORK WEEK AND FOUR WEEKS' PAID HOLIDAY PER YEAR. THE MINISTERS ALSO CONSIDERED A COMMISSION PROPOSAL TO BAN DISCRIMINATION AMONG WORKERS ON THE GROUNDS OF SEX. AFTER A LENGTHY DISCUSSION, THE PROPOSAL WAS RETURNED TO THE COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) FOR A MORE COMPLETE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF SUCH A DECISION ON EXISTING SOCIAL WELFARE LEGISLATION IN THE COMMUNITY. FINALLY, THE MINISTERS AGREED TO CONGRIBUTE OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS APPROXIMATELY DOLS 5 MILLION FOR FINANCING STUDIES ON THE CAUSES OF POVERTY IN VARIOUS COMMUNITY REGIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. FORTY-HOUR WORK WEEK/4-WEEK VACATION: THE EC SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTERS APPROVED A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MEMBER STATES CALLING FOR A STANDARDIZED 40-HOUR WORK WEEK AND FOUR WEEKS PAID VACATION FOR MOST WORKERS THROUGHOUT THE EC. THE RECOMMENDATION WILL NOT BE LEGALLY BIDDING UPON THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBER STATES ALTHOUGH ITS APPROVAL BY THE MEMBER

UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 02 EC BRU 05469 181925Z

STATES SUGGESTS THEIR WILLINGNESS TO COMPLY. THE

COMMISSION HAD URGED THAT THE RECOMMENDATION TAKE EFFECT BY THE END OF 1975, BUT THE MINISTERS ALTERED THIS DATE TO DECEMBER 31, 1978 BECAUSE OF A DESIRE NOT TO HAVE THE RECOMMENDATION TAKE EFFECT DURING THE PRESENT PERIOD OF ECONOMIC RECESSION.

3. SIX DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT: THE MINISTERS HELD A LENGTHY DEBATE ON A COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE BANNING DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT. WHILE MOST, IF NOT ALL, MEMBER STATES AGREED IN GENERAL TERMS WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF NON- DISCRIMINATION A NUMBER THOUGHT THE COMMISSION'S DRAFT DIRECTIVE REQUIRED FURTHER STUDY AND TIGHTENING. UK SOCIAL SERVICES SECRETARY BARBARA CASTLE WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMMISSION'S DRAFT FOR PRESENT SOCIAL AFFAIRS LEGISLATION. FOR EXAMPLE, SHE ESTIMATED THAT LOWERING THE MINIMUM AGE FOR THE RECEIPT OF SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS BY MEN FROM 65 TO 60 WOULD COST THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT APPROXIMATELY 1.4 BILLION POUNDS. THE ENTIRE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN RETURNED TO COREPER AND TO THE COMMISSION FOR STUDY IN LIGHT OF THE COUNCIL'S DISCUSSIONS.

4. PILOT PROJECTS TO COMBAT POVERTY: AFTER OVERCOMING THE NOW STANDARD GERMAN RELUCTANCE TO HELP FUND NEW EC UNDERTAKINGS, THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTERS AGREED TO PROVIDE UP TO 50 PERCENT OF THE COST OF PILOT PROJECTS TO STUDY THE CAUSES OF POVERTY IN THE COMMUNITY. APPROXIMATELY DOLS 3.25 MILLION IS TO BE PROVIDED FROM THE EXISTING BUDGET IN 1975, WITH AN ADDITIONAL DOLS 3.6 MILLION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE IN 1976. A NUMBER OF DELEGATIONS URGED THAT FUNDING FOR THESE ANTI-POVERTY STUDIES BE CONTINUED BEYOND THE INITIAL TWO YEAR PERIOD, BUT THEY WERE UNABLE TO OBTAIN GERMAN AGREEMENT AND AS THE PROGRAM NOW STANDS ALL COMMUNITY FUNDS WILL BE CUT OFF AT THE END OF 1976.

5. TRAINING ASSISTANCE FOR YOUNG WORKERS: THE MINISTERS AGREED THAT THE EC SOCIAL FUND SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY IN TERMS OF EXPENDITURES TO MEMBER STATE PROJECTS AIMED AT IMPROVING THE JOB- RELATED QUALIFICATIONS OF WORKERS UNDER 25. (APPROXIMATELY DOLS 65 MILLION REMAINS UNSPENT UNDER TITLE THREE OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 EC BRU 05469 181925Z

SOCIAL FUND.) DURING THE DISCUSSIONS, THE COUNCIL REJECTED AN ITALIAN SUGGESTION THAT SOCIAL FUND ASSISTANCE TO YOUNG WORKERS BE DISTRIBUTED WITH THE SPECIFIC AIM OF ASSISTING WORKERS IN HARD-PRESSED INDUSTRIES LOCATED IN DEPRESSED AREAS. GREENWALD

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